

Isaiah 66 – The arrival of the End

Routines in life help us cope with life. They allow you not to have to think about everything. If we have to think about everything we do we wouldn't cope with life.

I have a morning routine that I don't think about. Many aspects of driving your car you do without thinking much anymore. This gets highlighted to me when I borrow a manual car and come back to our automatic. When I get back into our auto car I go to put my foot on the clutch without thinking.

However if we routinely live all of life without thinking about God it is bad especially if you know God's special revelation to us in Jesus.

In Isaiah 66 Isaiah reminds us who God is. He shows us what it means to be fake in relationship with God and if we are what we can expect. He also shows us what it means to have a real relationship with God and if we do what to expect.

This is our last week in our series in Isaiah so let's see what he has to say to us.

1. GOD

Read: 1-2a

Notice the phrase: "This is what the Lord says." Remember this is God speaking not just Isaiah. It is God telling us about himself. What does he say?

God rules over all. Puts us in our place.

He also tells us that he is infinite & independent. God is infinite. God doesn't share this with us his incommunicable characteristics. They are unique to Him. He is not bound by body. He is not confined by time or space. God is everywhere equally present. There is no place God isn't fully present. I can only be one place and even there I am not always present. God is everywhere equally present.

God possesses everything. And in everything he is in his character he does in perfection.

He is also **independent**. He is self sufficient. Self existent. Apart from God I cannot exist apart from me God does exist. Life is lived between 2 hospitals. We need a support system from birth to death to sustain life. Air, water, food.

Matthew Henry says: "The greatest and best men in the world say by God's grace I am what I am but God says I am what I am."

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

Looking through a children's daily devotional book this week I noticed that every reading was about what you should do as a Christian. They were all about the 'imperatives' of the Christian life. This give you the impression that the Christian life and the Bible is about a set rules. We need to read the Bible for the prior message of who God is and what he does. We need to look for the 'indicatives' about God and then we look for how to respond to Him.

Isaiah shows us 2 responses to this understanding of God.

2. Fake relationship with God

Read: 2

Israel was showing **confidence in empty formalism and religious ritual**. It is useless. They were focusing on the temple instead of the God of the temple. This is no better than pagan superstition and angers God .

God's not looking for our empty forms which are fake expression of a relationship with God.

They are fake, phoney, hypocritical.

It is a God demotion and our promotion. So that we think all we have we deserve because of how great we are.

A newspaper in the US conducted a social experiment. They asked Joshua Bell, a violonis to play in a

Washington subway during rush hour.

For an hour he performed amazing pieces of music on a Stradivarius violin valued at over 3.5 million dollars. More than a 1000 walked by without glancing. A few paused for a moment. Some people tossed some loose change. Total of \$32.17. Only 1 person recognised him as the person who a few nights later would receive the prize for being the best classical musician in America.

It is even worse when go about the 'rush hour' of life not noticing the author of life.

To do church in the finest style but with a closed heart, is evil in God's eyes. It is choosing what he does not delight in, and he will destroy it.

3. What you can expect?

Read: 4, 15-17

Notice the connecting word **SO**. It shows us what God says he will do is in response to what Israel has done.

Israel receives **OPPOSITION** - Opposition from God. God opposes the **PROUD**.

Proverbs 16:5

The LORD detests all the **proud** of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

Not if pride exists but where it exists. Be convinced that we are all pride.

Read v.24. A very vivid picture of what people can expect.

Jesus speaks about hell more than anyone else. This is what he says in Mark 9:48 – hell, where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

At universities these days when you submit an assignment it has to go through a 'plagiarism' programme to check for plagiarism. Plagiarism is wrong because it covers up the real author. We commit Cosmic plagiarism. We give ourselves the credit so covering the real author.

Ask God to search you. So that you might confess sin. Overcome pride.

4. Real relationship with God

Read: 2

Real relationship with God is described in three words.

HUMBLE – People who are humble recognise their need. Recognise they are not self sufficient. Someone who says I can't do it. I need help. All we are, all we have is from God. To see ourselves as God sees us in Christ. Sinners but saved. Rebels but redeemed.

CONTRITE – Is used for people who are **crippled**. So again we recognise we are **Crippled of spirit**. We are sick and need a healer. We are broken. We are unable to function in the way God wants us to. We have a sense of our inability. Our need for what alone he can provide.

TREMBLE – to be fearful. To have a sense of awe or stunned fear before something. Take the word seriously. Longs to know it and fears the thought of not keeping it. **LOVES and DELIGHTS**.

Jesus is all these personified. Remember Philippians 2. He didn't consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing. He trembled at God's Word in that he obeyed. He is the model for us of how to live in real relationship with God.

Yo cannot tremble at God's Word if don't read it so have you read the Bible this week?

If you want to grow in your understanding and so your humility read either Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology or *Bible Doctrine*.

Think about the death of Jesus. John Stott says “No one who has been to the cross and seen God's immeasurable and unmerited love displayed there can go back to a life of selfishness.”

Does this describe you? When you start the day to you say: I am weak needy, desperate.

5. What you can expect?

Read it: 2b

For God to **LOOK** upon you – **v.2. Eyes are a theme in the Bible.** 2 Chronicles 9:6 - For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

God uses this image to draw our attention to what captures his attention. Nothing escapes his notice but he searches for one thing. He sees everything but one thing takes his gaze. There is one thing that comes up on his radar. Humility is divinely attractive. Not only is God passionately opposed to pride he is also decisively drawn to humility. Personally supportive of the humble. He LOOKS. He cares, He loves, He protects, He wants to provide. God looking over every details of your life. It's the kind of looking when I'm **watching the girls** play at the park.

So God's gaze is upon us. Watchful gaze. His purposeful look.

You can expect **OPPOSITION – 5-6.**

Even though they'll suffer at the hands of their enemies, they will be vindicated by God's. His judgement will fall because their enemies are his enemies.

Matthew 5:11,12 - *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

You can expect **MORE BELIEVERS – v.7-9**

God is going to do a miracle. A new ppl of God. Sudden, expected, It can only be the work of God. Emerged as the church of Jesus. Pentecost – 3000 added to their number.

You can expect **COMFORT – 10-11.** As a mother's comforts and cares for her child so God's ppl will be comforted and cared for by God.

As well as: **PEACE – v.12; to FLOURISH – v.14 and to ENDURE – 22.**

You can expect **YOU TO BE USED – 18-24**

God will gather people from all the nations into his Kingdom. The place names stand symbolically for the whole earth. This is God's plan in holding off judgment. What should we then be consumed by?

We live between the 1st and 2nd comings of Jesus.

It is not enough for our response to Isaiah today to be a momentary mediation. There must be purposeful application. We can admire humility and remain proud. We need to weaken pride and strengthen humility.

There is an intensity in the last chapter of Isaiah. Why? He is making his final appeal

Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Have you turned to God especially in his son Jesus?

Are you living a life that is dependent upon Jesus?